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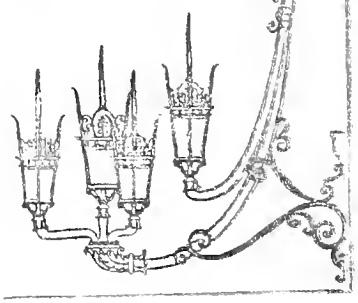

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BOSTON REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

BACK BAY TASK FORCE REPORT

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JUNE 4, 1970

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June 4, 1970
7:50 p.m.

CHAIRMAN WARNER: Those of you in the back who haven't found seats, if you would please, we would like to begin and there seems to be some question as to whether we had said 7:30 or eight o'clock, and we compromised by starting at neither time.

I am John Warner, the director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority and I thought I would begin tonight's I guess mini-town meeting or neighborhood meeting.

Can you hear me all right?

VOICES: Yes, yes.

CHAIRMAN WARNER: Fine. I thought I would explain to you briefly what has gone into the preparation of this Back Bay task force report and explain what the Boston Redevelopment Authority intends to do about the portions of the report that were unanimous in their opinions and decisions, and generally bring you up to date and then turn the meeting over to Erwin Canham, who is the chairman of the task force.

First of all the city redevelopment authority owes a vote of thanks and I give them a sincere one to those who served on this task force. Some of them

I am sure will find that they haven't pleased their neighbors, but the work was done in the true spirit of dedication and interest and the City of Boston once again proves, I think, its kind of secret greatness in the kind of people that we got to serve on this task force.

Erwin Canham, as I said, is the chairman. He is the president of the Back Bay Federation for Community Development. Bill Doebele is professor of Advanced Environmental Studies at Harvard University. Those of the task force who are here, take a quick bow, as I run through the names.

Charles Hilgenhurst, who is the administrator of planning, urban design and advanced projects of the BRA, and Lawrence Mezoff, president of the Back Bay Association, and Henry Millon, professor of architecture at MIT and William Nash, professor of city and regional planning at Harvard University and Lawrence Perera, president of the Back Bay Neighborhood Association and John Ryan, president of Ryan, Eliott & Company and Frederick Stahl, who is chairman of the preservation committee of the Boston Society of architects and Phillip Theopold, chairman of the executive committee of the Real Investment Trust of America and Walter Muir Whitehill, director of the Boston Athenaeum;

and they were given I think good cooperation and help I hope from Bob Pleshaw, who is the executive secretary of the task force in charge of zoning for the Boston Redevelopment, and Lisa Gray, who is secretary of the task force. [Applause.]

Thank you all. Why are you here and why are we here, I think, is the important question.

You are here, I hope, because you are interested in the future of the Back Bay. I am here because I think it is important that the Boston Redevelopment Authority act as an aggressive instrument in preserving neighborhoods in the city and we are interested in preserving the Back Bay as a neighborhood.

One of the great tragedies of the urban living in the postwar era has been the flight of the middle class, the upper middle class from the city to the suburb.

I think the Back Bay can be called a middle class, upper middle class or upper class neighborhood and it is as important to sustain its development and growth and to retain it as a neighborhood as it is to retain the neighborhood characteristics of any other section of the city.

Other sections that we have spent sometimes

unfortunately much more time and effort than we spend in the Back Bay. The Boston Redevelopment Authority is becoming, I hope, an energetic partner in this attempt to sustain neighborhood growth in the city.

We are trying to do it in many neighborhoods and in the Back Bay we are going to follow the dictates of the task force. We are not creating one study commission after another just for practice or exercise. We intend to implement those parts of the report that the task force was unanimous on and tonight we would like to hear your feelings on the creation of high-rise buildings in the Back Bay.

So, I think we can address ourselves to business right away. Then, as I said, it is my intention to implement many of the recommendations of the task force as soon as possible.

The task force unanimously agreed on enlarging the Back Bay, the architectural district to include Newbury and parts of Boylston and this will require an amendment to the existing legislation to creat a commission and within the next week we will file with the corporation counsel of the City of Boston the proposed text change. This change will then require the approval of

the City Council, the Mayor, and the state legislature. A rather cumbersome procedure, but I have no doubt we will be successful if we push it strongly and we will.

To enable the expanded architectural district commission to carry out its enlarged duties, we will suggest that the number of commissioners be increased from five to seven with one of these members being appointed by the Mayor and the other by the Boston Society of Architects and each of these members will be either a resident of the Back Bay or have his place of business within the district.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority will assist the commission in any way necessary by providing technical assistance.

I would like to do a little editorializing here on the second recommendation that we are discussing, and that is the question of the Prince School. There are perhaps many of you here who couldn't care one way or the other whether or not the Prince School is retained in the Back Bay.

However, whether you have school age children or do not, the fact of the matter is as citizens and taxpayers, members of our community, it should be

important to you because the Prince School question reflects once again tragically the fact that the racial imbalance law does not work.

This is the law that was passed for the loftiest of motives, and much bitter discussion and controversy and some people opposed it, for I think wholly wrong reasons, but the fact of the matter is the racial imbalance law doesn't work and I say that as the head of the agency that has a responsibility for acting as the city's planning agency.

The Prince School will be closed because there will be a school, the Carter School built in the South End and in order to keep the Carter School racially imbalanced, we must close the Prince School.

One of the things I feel very strongly the neighborhood needs one of the strong factors in sustaining the neighborhood feeling and development is the neighborhood school. The Back Bay, if we are to preserve it as a neighborhood, will be dealt a very severe blow if the Prince School is closed.

We have the ironic situation of a law that was passed in order to help the black community of the city which now is punishing the black community by not allowing

black children to attend decent schools in their neighborhoods. The few decent schools that do exist. And a glaring example is the Trotter School, a fine school that black children who live near it cannot attend because they will imbalance the school if they do.

We have this law which really is punishing both the black and white children in the city. I have said this in other places and at other times. I intend to continue to say it. I think the State Board of Education should take a careful thoughtful review of the racial imbalance act. It doesn't work and it is one of the factors that is having a very pernicious effect on the neighborhoods of the City of Boston and throughout the Commonwealth. This we will once again suggest is a terribly difficult question. The answer that has been arrived at is arrived at as I said with the best of motives, but the fact of the matter is it doesn't work. So, we will continue to try and follow the task force recommendation which was that the Prince School be retained within the Back Bay.

Those of you who are interested in this can get more detailed information from us at the Boston Redevelopment Authority and I intend to press this issue with the State Board of Education.

It is an important factor; one of the most important factors in the neighborhood activity.

The second recommendation of the task force which we intend to implement is the amendment to the Boston Park Frontage Ordinance which was passed by the Mayor and the City Council in 1965. Eight corner sites on Commonwealth Avenue were designated as high rise sites. The sites on Commonwealth Avenue and Arlington and Berkeley and Clarendon and Dartmouth and we will ask that an ordinance be filed in the City Council to strike out this amendment. The Arlington corners I think will be discussed more fully by Mr. Canham and members of the task force. We are not putting ourselves out of the ball park in being able to come back in and discuss the Arlington corners, and so we think that the Park Frontage amendment should in its entirety be repealed and then we will approach the question of the high rise with one package. There were several recommendations made regarding parking in the Back Bay and the commission suggested for all new residential construction that takes place the developer must provide the parking ratio of one space for every one dwelling.

It has been my experience in almost every case that developers have been meeting this ratio. I asked

the traffic department to review this; my thought to be to make it a city-wide requirement.

The second recommendation is development of a reasonable parking ratio for rehabilitated or converted units and the commission has recommended that permission should not be given for conversion of more than three units without the developer making provision for parking and they suggested one parking space for every two additional units or portions thereof and this is an excellent suggestion and one that will go a long way to alleviate the previous parking situation in the Back Bay.

The traffic department has been asked to review this for implementation. We are also discussing with the Mayor a matter that I know he is most concerned with and as a resident of the Back Bay I feel quite strongly about it; and we are going to ask that an order be filed in the City Council to permit the traffic division to issue parking stickers for parking in the Back Bay, one to a family, the Back Bay residents.

I think that this will take us away from the constant harassment of the ever present meter maids who if they are not doing their job anywhere else are certainly doing it in the Back Bay. [Laughter.]

[illegible]

Another recommendation which we intend to carry out immediately concerns controlling the number of dwelling units in the rehabilitated buildings according to the minimal square footing. The implementation of this recommendation will prevent a property owner from carving up a building into the closet-like apartments. We will file an amendment with the zoning commission which will establish the minimum apartment size for all rehabilitated buildings.

Some of our staff who are the technical people here will discuss it with you more in detail later.

The task force was concerned with the number of vacant lots within the Back Bay district and we currently are entertaining various development proposals for certain sites. All new construction established on Newbury and Boylston Street and any developments of vacant sites on residential Back Bay which will now include Newbury, will provide a review and approval by the Back Bay Architects Commission and the task force also devoted itself to a serious question of relocation of the educational institutions within the Back Bay.

The task force requested that strict zoning limiting the further expansion of educational

[illegible]

[illegible] Dr. [illegible] and Mr. [illegible] Bro. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

institutions be enforced. In April of 1970 the Boston Redevelopment Authority on behalf of the Mayor filed an amendment which would make any expansion of an educational institution anywhere in the city subject to a hearing before the board of appeals. This amendment was approved by the zoning commission and became law in May. This is a very significant new law. Many people were concerned that the Back Bay in itself was on the way to becoming a very elegant dormitory and effectuation of this law means now that we can control and plan the educational institutions in the city.

We intend to work very closely with them. It is not our intention to harass them. We have to take into consideration the economic facts of life, but the expansion of tax free institutions in the city has got to be restricted.

The Boylston Street question has become very serious and we are developing a review group within the staff of the Boston Redevelopment Authority to take a close look at it. Some of you may have become aware of the new project that we are attempting to implement which will be called Park Plaza. It is a 35-acre area beginning at Arlington Street bounded by Boylston Street and Stuart

Street going all the way down through Washington Street.

We think it has tremendous potential. We think that this location is perhaps one of the most attractive in the city, if not the most attractive, it could be, abounding the Public Garden and the Common as it does.

The design and review group of architects looked at our proposals the other day and I am told were very much impressed with our plans. These plans have a great deal of impact on what happens on Boylston Street.

Now, one recommendation that has already received wide attention is the suggested designation of Boylston Street between Arlington and Massachusetts Avenue for appropriate high rise development.

The task force adopted a staff position of the Boston Redevelopment Authority recommendation that Boylston Street could attract mixed office, commercial, retail, and residential use. The Boston Redevelopment Authority, at the urging of the task force, has been reviewing this recommendation in greater detail.

We find that at present there is approximately 370,000 square feet of land within this area, of which 140,000 square feet are currently residential floor area;

a million and a quarter square feet of retail and office space for total floor area of almost a million and a half square feet.

It is our thought that after proper review, planning, and study with the Park Plaza recommendation, then an amendment with the zoning commission might be filed to establish new height restrictions on Boylston Street. This would be in line with 150 feet for retail and office space and would permit construction of the buildings not to exceed 13 stories in height, approximately 370,000 square feet of retail space would be allowed on the ground floor level and as much as 3-1/2 million square feet of new commercial could be generated by this new height provision.

This Park Plaza project is a long-term look at Boylston Street as is much of the planning we are doing in regard to the Back Bay.

The Boylston Street question must be resolved within the total plan of the Park Plaza and I think that it can be done if it is done properly and carefully.

We consider that giving bonuses to a developer who wishes to construct to a maximum height of 200 feet, if the top six floors are devoted to a residential

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

development, a developer would then be able to construct an 18-story building, one floor below street for parking, one floor for retail space and this is the kind of development that we think is consistent with the high spine concept, starting all the way from the Prudential Center and ending up literally down at the Harbor and the waterfront.

The task force also recommended that a new height restriction of 120 feet be permitted on the Massachusetts Avenue, such as the proposed height restrictions contained within our Fenway project, and we favor this proposal and amendments will be filed in the zoning commission creating this new zoning for Massachusetts Avenue.

Also very thoughtful and positive recommendations by the task force to provide a more positive linkage between the Esplanade, the Charles River, and the Back Bay. This will require action on the part of the MDC which has jurisdiction over the Esplanade and I have asked members of the Boston Redevelopment Authority staff to sit down with the MDC people and to tell them that we would like to present to them in conjunction with them, in cooperation with them, but we are going to nudge them and

we are going to push them a little bit on this for some architectural design plans for better pedestrian linkage with the Esplanade and the Back Bay.

It is still a little bit too tough and too difficult to walk from the Back Bay to the Charles River Esplanade. It ought to be easier and better ways of doing it and we intend to push very strongly for this kind of construction in the Back Bay.

I think it makes good sense and once again it is part of our concept of preserving the Back Bay as a neighborhood, not as a museum; but as a neighborhood where people can live and play and enjoy themselves.

On the parks of the Back Bay, the mall, the Commonwealth Avenue, which the Back Bay Association and many groups in the Back Bay have been so helpful on; young trees and saving it and the attempt which I think appears to be successful toward saving the elms, we are right now, the park department is in the process of constructing the sprinkler system and we hope very much to continue this.

I have some of our people in the Boston Redevelopment Authority looking for some extra money. There doesn't seem to be much around these days from the federal government or anyplace else, but I know the park

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

department is having its troubles as far as future planning of this project goes.

I hope they will try to speed it up a little bit and I would also like to see the continuation of the Dartmouth Street Mall project pushed along. These are things that the task force has asked for.

We couldn't agree with them more, and we intend to press for the resolution of these items.

Now, this hasn't been a very exciting little expose that I have given you on what the Boston Redevelopment Authority intends to do on the task force proposals. I wanted to make the point that this is not an exercise in rhetoric or reason to take up people's evening hours in discussion.

We will implement those parts of the task force report that had agreement.

Now, there was another rather significant area of disagreement on the part of the task force that relates to the question of the construction of high-rise buildings in the Back Bay. We are not going to debate this forever. Tonight's meeting has another very serious purpose and that is as far as I am concerned it will be the last public hearing discussion of high-rise in the

Back Bay for my tenure, whatever that may be.

I think that we should discuss it fully tonight. I hope that those of you who have something thoughtful to say on the matter will be heard and let us know how you feel on the question of constructing high-rise in the Back Bay.

We know how the task force feels. They will review their feelings for you again this evening briefly. When all of this is completed, we intend to take as serious and unbiased a look at it as we can, and I say unbiased, because I am a resident of the Back Bay and so I would have to be a bit guilty of some kind of a conflict of interest in all this, I suppose, but we will look at it, review it, and make a determination and make a recommendation to the zoning commission.

We will not drag it out. It will be done forthwith, I guess is the best word that I can use. So, in order for you to get an opportunity to fully hear and talk on this question of high-rise and any other questions you might want to wish to address the task force report, I would like to turn the rest of this meeting over to Erwin Canham who is the chairman of the Back Bay task force and I know that Erwin will be well able to handle

Bro. Dr. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

questions.

Well, we do have some staff people here who can get into some of the technical questions that might be involved and so, Erwin, if I may, I think I will bow out of the picture right now and turn it over to you. [Applause.]

ERWIN D. CANHAM
President, Back Bay Federation
for Community Development

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you very much, Mr. Warner. Ladies and gentlemen, from what the Chairman Warner has said to us you can see, as I'm sure you already have, that he gave the task force a very large job to undertake and, of course, we couldn't take an undue length of time to do it.

As you have heard from what he has said, it is his intention to do everything that can be done within his role and authority as director of the Boston Redevelopment Authority to carry out the agreed recommendations of the task force, but with as much that needs to be done, it can only be done by other agencies within the city. I know if it were within Mr. Warner's authority to carry these recommendations out, he would do so forthwith, but it is necessary to go through many other agencies in the city to

get complete accomplishment.

Yet, as he has said, he is going ahead fully with the authority of his office behind this task.

The purpose of this meeting as is obvious is to explain a little more fully to the community the involved, interested community the view and advice of the task force and to hear from spokesmen in the involved and interested parts of the community your views.

I am, therefore, in a moment or two going to call on two members or three members of the task force, two of whom represent the views of the so-called majority, and one the so-called minority on the only major controversial division between us.

Before I do that I think I should read to you the views of legal counsel which we solicited and obtained on the recommendations of the task force. Part of Mr. Warner's charge to us was to obtain views of counsel on this matter, and the Boston Redevelopment Authority and our task force turned to the firm of Ely, Bartlett, Brown & Proctor and received from them on date of April 30 the following statement on the important legal issues involved.

[Moderator Canham then read the letter dated April 30.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Let me interpose my own view just for clarification. You probably all realize that as of now there is not zoning protection for the Back Bay and all sorts of things could happen at present under existing statutes.

Is this an accurate statement, Counsel Perera?

MR. PERERA: Yes.

MODERATOR CANHAM: So, it has been exposed in this area and that is one reason why we recommended the zoning changes.

[Moderator Canham then continued with the letter of April 30th.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: I wanted to set forth before you the thing and apologize for its technical nature just in case it happens to come in controversy or discussion later on in the course of the meeting, and now I would like to turn the floor over, the microphones over to several members of the task force who will, I trust briefly, discuss with you the nature of the basis of our differences of opinion and first I would like to turn to a very distinguished planner and architect, Mr. Stahl.

FREDERICK A. STAHL
Chairman of Preservation Committee,
Boston Society of Architects

MR. STAHL: Thank you. I would like to underline first of all, perhaps to eliminate some misconception of how the differences of opinion, that this is not a difference of opinion between development and no development points of view; it is a difference of opinion about form; which development should most beneficially take in this area of the city, and to underscore for you that the majority view takes issue with the form of development and not with the concept of development itself; and there are, as you know, a number of sites in the Back Bay which are presently vacant. There will be I am sure requirements to reconstruct as time goes on and there will be without a doubt the need of the designer to rehabilitate and internally reorganize large numbers of buildings in the Back Bay.

In addition to that the majority report focuses on a number of key adjacent areas which we believe have an indisputable impact on the future of this district in terms of their future development and these are in quick summary, Kenmore Square, Boylston Street as has been expressed already by the director in reference to the

staff recommendations, of course, and now subsequent to our formal deliberations of the announcement of a most ambitious and complex component of development in Park Square.

Now, these are mentioned in the sequence because they are not only geographically but dynamically related in terms of the overall dynamics of the development of the city.

The concept of the high spine which I am pleased to say is now adopted by the planning agency was first advanced by the American Institute of Architects, Boston Chapter, about ten years ago, and these basic plans and concepts have their way of ultimately taking root.

And as a result of this, this high-spine complex, substantial new developments, and high density are now being planned for Park Square, Boylston Street, and we would suggest potentially for Kenmore Square.

So that we look at this question tonight in the context of $300 million worth more of development than we have looked at than when the report was written and I point out that this is within ten minutes' walk of substantial portions of the Back Bay and shares the same outdoor spaces or transportation connections and so on.

So, I think again to try to give some dimensions to this, the potential, and I am talking about meaningful potential of new residential construction in those three areas, breaks down roughly according to the Boston Redevelopment Authority in the new Park Square area 2,000 new dwelling units according to staff studies presented to us and some thinking that we have done on our own, another thousand or two potential new dwelling units on Boylston Street, and I think similar potential should Kenmore Square be intensified and characterized the same way.

So, at the edges of the Back Bay we are talking about within a planned format of development something like 6,000-plus new dwelling units. This is a substantial number. It is said that there are something like 7,000 dwelling units of apartment character; that is, rooming houses and dormitories present in the Back Bay.

So, this is another Back Bay and this is now in large part the policy and the direction of the development of the city.

One other new fact to bring everybody else up to date which seems to change rather rapidly. A great

deal of discussion and difficulty over the past years and many years in fact has been the question of schools and this occupied a tremendous amount of time of the task force.

The indication today is that a number of, at least one or more of the most major educational institutions in Back Bay are formally five-year type of plans to relocate to other portions of the inner city with a definite aim of vacating residential properties now occupied. A large number of smaller schools are experiencing an impact now of the Massachusetts Community College's program under the long-term impetus of the state colleges division of the Commonwealth, which is coming into line now and I understand that enrollments have suffered severely in this academic year and prospects of next year are perhaps even more bleak.

So, I would suspect from the agency's point of view and the problem may very rapidly become, how are we going to sustain some of these more valuable educational institutions and keep them within the city; whereas, even a year ago the problem was exactly the reverse, and I think this tends to show how neighborhoods can be materially affected by the policies at the state level.

Jack Warner mentioned other policies at the

state level; the racial imbalance act, etc., and I would like to quickly run through some of the visual documents, because I have a feeling that we may end up talking in the abstract and when we are talking about six high-rise buildings, whether to build them or not, we are talking very specifics and we have some slides, if we can have them on the screen quickly, bearing in mind hopefully through this that outside of the district we are talking now of as many dwelling units as now exist in the Back Bay, adjacent.

[Slide.] This is the majority proposal which probably doesn't need much comment. In effect it says that the texture of the Back Bay is worthy of preservation.

This does not mean that every building is worthy of preservation. It does not mean that every building is going to be preserved, but that the texture, the scale, the harmony and relationships are suited.

[Slide.] This is the minority proposal which singles out pairs of sites which I will quickly run through for you. There are two sites at the juncture of Commonwealth Avenue and Charlesgate.

[Slide.] And you can see the rest. This is one of the sites. It is the Somerset Hotel. There is

no indication that anyone wants to build a high-rise building on this location.

I am informed that the owners of this building have petitioned to rehabilitate it into an office building which would commit them to the kind of investment in this building which would almost guarantee its preservation for another 15 or 20 years.

[Slide.] This is the other corner. This is Garland College. I doubt whether anyone wants to give Garland College a bonus to build a 20-story building.

[Slide.] This is the corner of Arlington and Commonwealth presently occupied by Harwich House. It is the old Sears mansion. I don't think Harwich House is asking to build a high-rise building. I was told one time by the president of that organization that he preferred to -- the head of CBS -- that he preferred to meet in his drawing room because CBS was rather cold and impersonal.

[Slide.] These are two sites on Beacon Street.

[Slide.] Which are really the only arguable residential locations, I think, in the context of what is already being formulated for the other sites.

It is my understanding that 100 dwelling

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

units will be removed to permit the construction of high-rise buildings on these sites and that something like a net addition of 200 dwelling units for the entire Back Bay will result, and I ask you to view this in the context of six or seven thousand new dwelling units adjacent on the other extremities of the Back Bay; and I also ask you to consider that the 1967 plan which as you have heard has largely been discredited by the deletion of all of the additional high-rise sites, even by the high-rise minority advocates here this evening that the plan recommended a 200-foot height for this location, but the minority report recommends 250-foot height for this location and the developer intends to seek a variance to construct two buildings of 285 and 320 feet respectively.

I suggest to you that this is what happens when you single out hot spots for high rise, hot spots, and that you can expect that the 320 and the 285 may be indeed modified further even before the hearing.

I think there has been modification over the past few months and in our committee meetings we refer to this as the camel's nose in the tent, and this I think is symptomatic of the invitation to see how far you can go.

Now, you have heard Ely Bartlett's opinion.

It merely states that a sounder and more defensible position is a more thorough and comprehensive restriction.

I think you are all probably aware that there are any number of developers who have sat on their parcels for a good many years waiting for someone else to stick his neck out and get something up, despite the fact that the zoning is more liberal now than it would be under restrictions.

We suspect that human nature being what it is, the opportunity to construct wildly out of scale and I underline wildly, wildly in excess of current densities and standards in the district, is an open invitation, a hunting license for any number of zoning variances to be forthcoming. [Applause.]

We will try to get through this quickly. Thank you.

[Slide.] That is a model which perhaps many of you have not seen, which simply indicates the nature of the Boylston Street proposal which we view as unifying, a unifying influence on the districts.

[Slide.] You are all familiar with Boylston Street today and I think it doesn't take much arguing in support of the Boston Redevelopment Authority's

proposals to organize and rehabilitate the street.

I think of it as a kind of Park Avenue scale before Park Avenue became dedicated to whiskey bottle companies and high-standing free-rise buildings.

[Slide.] This is more of Boylston Street today. As you can see, it needs to be pulled together and made again part of the fabric.

[Slide.] This is a diagram which doesn't quite include Kenmore Square, but it illustrates the dynamics of development.

This is a Boston Redevelopment Authority schematic. The red area is the new area designated as the Park Plaza, Park Square development, and you can see that the intensity development in downtown area being diverted by the Boston Common then flows in this high-spine concept out towards the Prudential.

[Slide.] That being the economic and land use invitation. This is rougly the area which has been set aside which Jack Warner mentioned as the Park Square development and you can see its relation to the Back Bay residential district. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you, Mr. Stahl.

Now, may I invite John Ryan, who is a very

able and busy leader of the Boston Real Estate Community to express his views.

JOHN RYAN
President, Ryan, Elliott & Company

MR. RYAN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think frankly the views of the majority have been very ably expressed by my colleague, Mr. Stahl, but I wanted to add a few random comments on my position in supporting the majority as a real estate person in our community.

I frankly came to serve on this task force prepared to support the federation plan for towers based on just my mental and emotional posture in attacking a problem like this, but I think the facts presented to our task force led me to the contrary, to support preservation in the area in the interest of good real estate for the whole City of Boston.

I am afraid that if we allow and get into the occasional tower, we are going to open Pandora's Box. Spot zoning has been mentioned earlier which I think will be indefensible legally.

I think it will lead to more contested developments in the Back Bay and I think we are going to

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

undork things like foundation problems that will lead to the unraveling of the fabric of the Back Bay. [Applause.]

I also frankly am quite interested in opportunity for real estate development; interested from my experience as a businessman, as a citizen having served on the Redevelopment Authority in its formative years, in the early part of the sixties.

To the real estate community the potential of this city I think was unraveled by the good planning and programming that went into a total plan for the city and this is why I feel we have to look at the Back Bay in terms of the whole Back Bay and in terms of how it fits into the fabric of the city.

To me the Boylston Street high-spine concept for intensive development I think is going to afford plenty of opportunity for a realistic development in areas that can span the commercial supports that you need when you build high-rise; the parking, the public transportation, the retail stores, the access to the Turnpike; and I think an example of what can happen on Boylston Street is the creation of the high-rise Prudential apartments to show that the market exists for something new in this area of the high spine.

I was also quite impressed that it was almost the unanimous opinion of the independent members of the members who came to serve on the task force without any previous position, supported this concept of the preservation of the residential area, the architectural scale of the residential area, and to me the credibility of the preservationists of the Boston Redevelopment Authority staff that presented the case just was overwhelming evidence as far as I was concerned for the future of the Back Bay area and I am concerned with values and long-range trends.

My judgment is that this preservation of the architectural scale is going to preserve and enhance real estate values in this residential area and the property values will improve and rise by the scarcity value, and as the high spine develops there will be an ever-increasing demand for the improving and rehabilitation of the existing Back Bay, the residential buildings in the residential areas that I believe should be preserved and there will be quality restoration and use appearing to support the future use of this area and I agree with my colleague Mr. Stahl, I think that the developer will find better opportunities for schools where they can fit into the fabric of the city's transportation and the city's ability to provide parking

areas and other commercial supports that go in my judgment better hand in hand with the school communities than existing in residential areas.

However, the problems I am well aware exist and are with us in the Back Bay and in my judgment Boylston Street has one of the greatest potentials of any street in America for development.

However, it certainly is in a rundown condition, many parts of it today.

I think also for a residential area the Back Bay traffic pattern leaves a lot to be desired. I'm quite impressed with the success we have had on Beacon Hill by preventing the easy through thoroughfares for traffic and in my judgment the improvement of the residential area will occur on a better and more restrictive traffic plan that can look at the city in terms of preserving the quality of the residential life and just fight the automobile tooth and nail. [Applause.]

Finally, I'm well aware that the redevelopment administrator of the Boston Redevelopment Authority does have a problem with vacant lots in the Back Bay that has to be dealt with and I think responsible citizens would like to see improvements consistent with quality,

[illegible]

architectural design and scale, and I would suggest that a vehicle does exist in the planned development area for the proper development of these vacant sites that would improve the general quality of the real estate in the Back Bay.

This in general are some random thoughts that I have had that led me to the conclusion that I would support the majority. Thank you. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you, Mr. Ryan.

The majority and minority seem to be appropriately represented here. The majority view has had some 25 minutes of time to stay very interestingly occupied, and I will now call on a spokesman for the minority and obviously he will be entitled to equal time, although I hope he won't find it necessary to take quite as much as that.

Lawrence Perera, as you all know, is indeed one of the most dedicated citizens of the Back Bay. He contributes a vast amount of his time to public service and most recently as chairman of the finance commission.

He is the president of the Neighborhood Association for the Back Bay and has been deeply committed to ideals of preservation and of development for a long time.

Therefore, I am very glad to be able to turn to him to explain the position of the minority task force. Lawrence Perera.

LAWRENCE PERERA
President, Back Bay Neighborhood Association

MR. PERERA: Thank you very much, Mr. Canham. I will not require equal time, but I hope to be able to complete my remarks in about eight minutes.

I must begin by divulging my prejudices. I have several. I live in the Back Bay, I live in a town house in the Back Bay on Marlboro Street. I believe that probably I know the area about as intimately as anyone here.

I am interested intensely in the conservation of all the unique qualities of the Back Bay and I dedicated myself in the past and will continue to do so to see that they are maintained and preserved.

Now, when we are talking about the Back Bay, we are talking about an area of the city which is distinguishable from other areas. Appropriate to the urban renewal process, this area is a self-help area. It is an area where the private sector must pull the biggest force. For that reason any plan in the Back Bay to be

successful must be workable, considering the disterminate within which it is to be achieved.

For that reason in 1965 the institutions and civic organizations of the Back Bay joined together to prepare their own destiny. This is unique in Boston and perhaps unique in the country, because I don't think any other area of the city to this date has prepared on its own a development plan covering every relevant public sector and private consideration.

The 1967 plan was what was essentially reviewed by the task force; that which you have heard about and in which I participated, and I think I should make it perfectly clear that the task force endorsed and I think ratified in substantial part all principal proposals set forth in the 1967 development plan.

The only issue as to which there was any dispute whatsoever among the task force members was to that element in the plan which related to the new construction.

I think I should reveal a bit what the plan talked about and what has been done in case some of you who are not familiar with what has been going on in the Back Bay recently might believe that for the first time this evening we are hearing about programs and policies

intended to benefit the area.

Since 1965 the Back Bay has been essentially secure against school and dormitory expansion. This by virtue of zoning amendments proposed and successfully urged before the zoning commission by the Neighborhood Association and the Back Bay Federation.

Since 1966 the Back Bay residential district has been protected by a system of architectural controls under a statute drafted by the Back Bay Federation and the Neighborhood Association; and I have had the privilege of serving up until recently as chairman of that commission.

Since 1966 intensive efforts have been made before the Board of Appeals and the zoning commission to propose proposals for indiscriminate development and I think it is fair to say that very few, if any, proposals for improper residential or school use have been permitted to pass by either of these city agencies.

In the same period of time aggressive steps have been taken by the local associations to foster public improvements in the open spaces of the Back Bay, in the streets, and many of these proposals are underway. Some have not as yet been adopted by the city and implemented; but they are in existence and they have been pushed for some

time by those of us who have been intimately involved in this neighborhood.

Now, I think we have to look at the area with that background fairly and objectively. On the plus side we have unique architectural, social, historical, and geographical advantages. On the debit side of the balance sheet we have to admit, I think, that we have a delicate residential to non-residential balance in population.

We have an overall population of perhaps as high as 21,000, and what I would consider to be a committed residential population; that is, those who participate in the electoral process who are more or less residential from the standpoint of having an indeterminate expectancy to stay in the Back Bay of 7,000. The balance I think is primarily composed of students and other transients who to some extent reflect care for the area and to some extent reflect responsibilities for its present condition and its future.

In this context it seems to me we have to analyze that portion of the task force report which represents the minority position.

The minority believes that the conservation of the unique architectural character of the Back Bay

should be assured and insured in future years against indiscriminate expansion by any developer, but at the same time it believes that this objective can be carried out within a disciplined and organized framework which will permit new construction of residential buildings on the periphery of the Back Bay area and by the periphery I mean on the portions of the Back Bay outside, which border upon uniquely large open spaces, some of which have already been developing along these lines for a great many years.

Let us begin by Arlington Street. As far back as 1925 the Ritz Carlton Hotel built to a parapet height of approximately 155 feet, because it was considered at that time to be an appropriate location for a structure of that height.

The minority report believes that the open site next to the Ritz Carlton is an appropriate site, considering its relationships to an existing structure, for a higher building than composes the general fabric of the area.

Let's consider the other sites where the minority recommended that new construction be permitted, not that we insist upon the new construction, but that we would tolerate it and set up a zoning framework which would

permit it, if proposed.

The water side of Beacon Street is the site, of course, to which I am referring. When the Back Bay was laid out, the Charles River Basin was tideland and it was probably impossible for any of the developers at that time to have predicted the changes that would have taken place after 1900; that when the city and state together created a permanent tidal basin, the houses I think after that event occurred found themselves turning the wrong way around, not in relation to Beacon Street which no longer was a singular advantage, but in the relationship to the river.

Since the time of the creation of the tidal basin, therefore, all substantial new development has occurred in a larger form than what was originally conceived of and put into position on the water side of Beacon Street, and I for one am unwilling to reject that or in the future buildings such as 330 Beacon Street and others in that street which provide in my opinion attractive and sound residential facilities for residents who in my opinion contribute greatly to the welfare of the Back Bay and in a far larger sense to the welfare of the city as a whole.

I believe the basin affords unique opportunity

for construction and I do not believe that these possibilities should be utterly rejected in any building.

The other locations suggested as possible sites by the minority for larger development occurred at the Charlesgate and Commonwealth Avenue intersection. To those of you who know the area, you will understand the construction of the interchange at Charlesgate has changed the atmosphere of what used to be a lovely entranceway to the Fens into a glorified cloverleaf carrying intensive amounts of traffic.

Kenmore Square has been in a precipitous decline for at least 25 years and in the opinion of the owners of the Hotel Somerset is so far beyond repair that those very owners have recently announced that they would be willing to sell their building, the Hotel Somerset and the Puritan to the Boston College as a student dormitory and residence for as many as a thousand students.

This proposal was only defeated by energetic action by the local community leaders; but on the other hand I might point out that that to me, that situation to me is not any evidence whatsoever that the owners of the Somerset look upon their building as a likely prospect for sound residential conversion and use now or in the future,

and I predict, though I can't be sure, that we will have problems from the Hotel Somerset again before long.

As to the other site across the street, I will admit that the buildings there now do not present any demand for development, but I think we have to take a long view and I think what we are attempting to do in the minority report is to establish a ground rule now which will be able to persist for at least a generation and hopefully for many generations and which will establish a guide which will not be changed annually by anyone, any individual developer or anyone else in the future, and for that reason it seems to me we have to expect orderly growth without necessarily having to predict it at this moment.

These are the sites we are talking about. What might be the effect if they were all developed?

Here you take to some extent a risk, but let me suggest what it was that the minority found. We found opportunities for the construction of approximately 500 good, new, in fact I think we would call them outstanding residential units, both condominium, cooperative, and leasehold. We feel that these, taking a rate of two occupants to each unit, which I think is modest, would create a thousand new committed residents of a substantial nature.

The only units that would be withdrawn from the residential inventory would be those at the Beacon and Dartmouth Street locations and so if we take a net offset of 100 units, we have still an input of 800 committed residents in a neighborhood of approximately 7,000. This is 10 percent, more than a 10 percent increase, which to my way of thinking and the others of the minority seemed like a reasonable number to create that offset and a positive advantage to the delicate and unsteady balance that exists at present between residents and transients within the Back Bay.

I would like to say one final thing about these high-rise sites before I wind up and that is this; that at the time the Back Bay was established, those who established it, those who established it were vigorous, courageous, and adventuresome men. They were not at all put off by the magnitude of the undertaking they set about to do and were successful at. They moved mountains or moved seas literally to keep what they did and they did it looking ahead, but at the same time taking a deep measure and stock as to what they needed and what they wanted.

I don't think that we should necessarily feel that if those people were here today they would not

be equally as adventuresome, equally as willing to look ahead and to take certain reasonable and calculated risks to preserve and to protect this neighborhood for a substantial future; and I think that we have to be careful when we take an attitude which seems to me reflects many present factors and conditions which it seems to me we cannot deny, but sometimes we can avoid looking at it in the eye.

I think the minority looks those factors in the eye and the majority avoids them. I think that the minority -- the fact that a majority of those in the minority are in fact residents of the neighborhood, whereas no members of the majority are residents of the neighborhood may to some extent reflect the difference in degrees of awareness and appreciation to the problems of the area between the two groups. [Applause.]

Now, let me, if I can, recapitulate in three short paragraphs. The minority report I submit provides for orderly planned growth based upon predictions for future development which can be reasonably expected to occur, and which will harmonize we believe the overall character and needs of the Back Bay.

The minority plan will resolve once and for

all the question which has been bugging the Back Bay to its disadvantage I may add for a great many years. I think that that fact alone, if we could do this now and expeditiously we would achieve more for the Back Bay than anything else we might do.

Finally, I do not believe that the adoption of the minority plan will lead to speculation on all sites. I think it will finally resolve in the speculated mind where they can develop and where they can't, and once the ground rules are clear, the private residential sector is going to know where it can rehabilitate with a reasonable expectancy of protection and where it may be permitted in other places of the city to develop.

I think that this is the kind of sensible straightening out that is needed and I think that the minority proposal meets the requirements of the area. It meets the expectancies of what we can predict can reasonably be expected to occur and I think it meets the needs of the neighborhood and I might add in a larger sense it meets the real needs of the City of Boston. Thank you. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you, Mr. Perera. I have had requests from three individuals representing groups who wish to make a statement and I have a letter

here from Senator Oliver Ames who lives in the neighborhood and represents it in the general court, from which I think it is only right to quote a paragraph or two to put on the record.

[Portions of Senator Ames' letter were read beginning: "It seems to me an arbitrary limitation" ... and ending "may cause eventual complete deterioration of the Back Bay."]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Those are the essential paragraphs. [Disturbance.]

There are as I said three individuals representing organizations who have asked to speak. I think there are microphones at certain points in the aisles which you can use.

They are Donald Winter, Chairman of the Back Bay Architectural Commission and Miss Elizabeth MacDougall of the Landmarks Commission and Daniel Ahern.

May I ask Mr. Winter if he would speak first and the microphone is quite near.

DONALD WINTER
Chairman, Back Bay Architectural Commission

MR. WINTER: Thank you very much, Mr. Canham. My name is Donald Winter, and I am

currently serving as chairman of the Back Bay Architectural Commission.

I would like to read a statement which was prepared, a portion of which appeared in the press yesterday.

The Back Bay Architectural Commission was established by state legislation in 1966. It is empowered to review and pass upon all exterior changes, including construction, alterations, demolition, painting and erection of signs, within the Back Bay residential district.

The purpose of the enabling law is to encourage architectural appropriateness and high design standards, to insure the compatibility of rehabilitation and new development activity within existing street forms and building patterns, to stabilize and strengthen residential property values in the area, and to "safeguard the heritage of the city by preventing the despoilation of a district which reflects important elements of its cultural, social, economic and political history."

The enabling law specifically provides that "the commission be strict in its judgment of plans involving substantial new construction or for structures deemed to be valuable according to studies performed on behalf of the city."

In view of the above mandate the commission finds it necessary to take a public position and make its feelings known with respect to new development within the district.

In 1969 the Boston Redevelopment Authority's director, John D. Warner, appointed a Back Bay task force and charged them with the responsibility of examining existing conditions in Back Bay, the influence of these conditions on rehabilitation and new development activity, and to determine the economic, social, and legal impact of any such development.

The commission decided that it would not take a public position on the issue of high-rise within the residential district until the task force had completed its report. This report has now been completed and after careful review of that report the commission wishes to record its endorsement and adoption of the recommendations of the majority report opposing high-rise within the residential district. [Applause.]

In the judgment of the commission, these recommendations will best serve the commission in carrying out its legal responsibility to prevent the despoilation of the district.

If I may have your permission, I would like to say I have spoken for the commission. I would like, if I might, to speak for myself for just a moment, and please understand that I do that.

You must understand the problem which we on the commission currently face. As was mentioned before right now we have a zoning heighth commission in the Back Bay.

I should explain it to you very briefly. It is floor area ratio five which means essentially you can have five times as much floor area as your building covers. You can go to the moon if you can assemble a large enough parcel.

We are mandated with preserving the architectural integrity of this district. One of the reasons why the law under which we operate is constitutional and valid is that there are within the district certain standards which one can objectivise; texture and color and materials, the domestic scale, the window; all of these are common elements which within a variety of styles represent what the Back Bay is architecturally.

But the key feature it seems to me of the Back Bay is the fabric of its street forms, the uniformity

of setback and the near uniformity of cornice heighth that when one stands on a corner and one looks on a block, one sees a block made up of individual units but all of which represent a similar street form.

Now, what are we to do when someone comes with a proposal for a high-rise? It seems to me that probably the commission would have to say it is inharmonious. I don't say that necessarily, but I say that is probably what will happen. What if in fact we decided that this particular building of 200 feet was a really nice one and we liked it and we said it was okay. What happens then once we set that precedent and a second developer comes along and wants to put his development in a middle of a block on Commonwealth Avenue or Marlboro Street or someplace else, where everyone seems to feel no high-rise should go?

The answer is this, we are in a difficult bind and I don't think we can permit one and not the other. We have come out in favor of the majority report, but I want to make this very clear, what we are asking for even more, although the majority of the commission does feel that the low rise solution is the better one, we want a mandate, we cannot act as a planning commission, we can't say you may have corners on Beacon Street, but no place

else.

The Boston Redevelopment Authority and the zoning commission can make that decision and if they make that decision, we will act within it.

Tonight it was announced that Mr. Warner intends to recommend to the zoning commission establishment of 120 feet along Massachusetts Avenue. This is fine. Within that envelope then the architectural commission can act.

So, what I am really saying personally is that we would like some guidance as to what we can do about high-rise. I have expressed the opinion of the commission that we prefer the low-rise solution, but if that is not to be the solution, let's have a definite plan so we can work on it. Thank you. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you, Mr. Winter.

Elizabeth MacDougall of the Landmarks Commission.

ELIZABETH MacDOUGALL
Landmarks Commission

MISS MacDOUGALL: Thank you, Chairman Canham. As the advisory board on establishing architectural

conservation in the City of Boston, we are charged with the development of a comprehensive preservation program for the City of Boston.

The Boston Landmarks Commission wishes to make the following statement. At its regularly scheduled meetings on May 28 and June 4, 1970, the commission voted unanimously, with the members of the task force abstaining, to endorse the majority of the report of the task force on the Back Bay.

We wish to make the following statement. The Back Bay is an architecturally distinguished area that has survived in a relatively undisturbed state. The physical character and the fabric of the area remained largely intact.

The area is nationally recognized for its architectural and planning significance and it is the only vital area of its period surviving in the country. It is one of the prominant physical assets of Boston and public policies that compromises its environmental conservation and architectural maintenance is socially destructive.

It is our belief that architectural character is dependent on the nature of the quality of an

[illegible] of [illegible] preferential treatment [illegible] the City of Boston.

The Boston Herald, The Boston Globe [illegible] the Flooding Ordinance. As the requisite majority [illegible] 20 on June 4, 1970, the Commission [illegible] minutes, then the chairman [illegible] to announce the majority. The results of the roll call [illegible] Bro. Bro.

[illegible] the Flooding Ordinance.

The Bro. Bro. [illegible] Commission, [illegible] the Supreme Court [illegible] the City. The Mayor [illegible] the Trust Fund. The [illegible] Trust Fund.

The [illegible] Bro. [illegible] a [illegible] of [illegible] the [illegible] Bro. [illegible] the [illegible] the [illegible].

It is the [illegible] Commission [illegible] the Public Notice [illegible] the [illegible] [illegible] Bro. [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

area's use as well as its physical appearance.

We, therefore, have the following remarks to make. To reiterate in some cases some that have already been made.

The selection of certain sites for high-rise development within the district that is spot-zoning is legally debatable and encourages the initiation of legal action of the granting of similar privileges to owners of comparable sites.

We believe that high-rise cannot be restricted to the specified sites and that a few high-rise buildings will establish clear precedence for continuing redevelopment throughout the Back Bay.

It is apparent that the Back Bay is now experiencing a residential revitalization. This trend has been stimulated by the development of the Prudential Center, by public policy changes made in 1965 and by strong private action.

The existing rehabilitation process has produced apartments of all sizes for a variety of income levels, has produced condominia and owner-occupied apartment buildings which are considered necessary for the further stimulation of development.

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]

The Landmarks Commission does not believe that high-rise development is the only way to stimulate property rehabilitation or to promote strong community involvement in the neighborhood.

It is our conviction that the majority report presents alternatives that will both encourage residential growth and rehabilitation in the area and strengthen development on Boylston Street. Given the small numbers of people to be housed in high-rise towers at the locations proposed in the minority report, the commission does not find the arguments presented to be logical, nor its conclusion to follow from the stated premises.

I will repeat in conclusion that for the consideration stated, the commission endorses the majority report. Thank you. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you, Miss MacDougall.

Is Daniel Ahern here?

DANIEL AHERN
Back Bay Federation

MR. AHERN: Thank you very much. I did not ask for an opportunity to speak, but thanks anyway.

I am pleased. [Laughter.]

The Back Bay Federation represents both residential and business organizations and in terms of tonight's meeting we would like to comment a little bit only from the business group.

The business people who were not invited here. I don't believe that the business community of Back Bay is in any way represented. This is a meeting for residents and I am rather surprised that the main subject for consideration really is building apartments in Park Square and along Boylston Street.

I presume that the business people who weren't consulted on this subject might suggest they better be built on Beacon Street. I doubt seriously that the building firms on Boylston Street or Park Square are prepared to leave or yield that easily.

I think in terms of the residential Back Bay area it is an interesting choice, and in the letter to the Globe this morning the chairman of the Landmarks Commission stated in the most succinct andinformative way possible that the buildings of the Back Bay can be preserved with difficulty. There are over 900 of them. Many of them are in extremely poor condition. Some of

the worse housing in the city is in the Back Bay. [Disturbance.]

One of the things that -- this is very true. I suggest, if you proceed directly to the corner of Beacon Street and Massachusetts Avenue and survey that area. There are remedies in the adoption of a good system of housing and the only organized effort in the Back Bay to preserve the housing and the character of the district have been those launched in the recent years by the Neighborhood Association and by the Federation.

We have secured 12 zoning amendments to limit non-residential growth and to protect the residential community.

The Back Bay population dropped very sharply in the period prior to 1965. It was dropping so rapidly that almost two thirds of the residents who were here in 1955 had left by 1965. There was a mass Exodus which would have continued except for the zoning regulations that we were successful in obtaining.

We also were successful in obtaining the architectural control systems which preserves the buildings we now have remaining in the area. It is a very efficient system.

We have also launched the open spaces program, including the Commonwealth Avenue, the Mall program, and I might add that the elm trees were dying at a rate which would have meant that by 1976 there would have only been approximately 22 out of 412, but we have preserved those successfully for two years, and I think will continue to do so.

The Mall is being improved in a general restoration program. These are the things that can be done, but the Back Bay population cannot be enlarged and strengthened and secured without additional construction. It is not possible.

There has been much talk of condominiums, but the first condominium building, and this is an excellent form of housing and housing improvement, was essentially an illegal one and when eight luxury apartments become eight luxury condominiums, the effect on the population, the size, and characteristics is very meager.

This is all that really happens, and in the long run there is a question, should the Back Bay be a residential community of size and strength, perhaps 15 to 20,000 persons primarily renters and owners or

should it be a community which is essentially a university community of students, with a growing number of businesses.

There have been several recent conversions of Commonwealth Avenue buildings from residential to commercial. There are three new applications that have come up within two months to the Board of Appeals for further conversions. There is underway the conversion of the residential property to commercial property in this area and so the buildings can be maintained with increasing commercial use, increasing student use, increasing transient use, and decline in the core resident population.

I think this is a choice and certainly one that you can make. I know that the people here from your attitudes, I think it is fair to say that you would prefer to save the buildings and allow the community to change and become more a school and educational district and a business district.

VOICES: No, no. [Disturbance.]

MR. AHERN: But the other choice, you must make a choice, I think, this is important; the other choice is for a community which actually has expansion prospects which offers a variety of housing units and apartments through new construction, and I think that is really the

choice and whicever you choose, you may very well be right. Thank you. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Are there others who would like to express themselves here tonight?

Are there any questions? Would you please tell the audience who you are?

JOSEPH L. ELDREDGE
Architect and Back Bay Resident

MR. ELDREDGE: My name is Joseph Eldredge and I live on Marlboro Street. The long wait for the Back Bay task force report started for me in 1949, when I first went to work as an architect in theBack Bay. My reaction to it has been one of profound relief with the report; first of all, relief at the quiet competence of the majority report, and secondly, the relief that the minority report was not as formidable as my fears had led me to believe. [Applause.]

I would also like to say and express now my profound respect, admiration, and gratitude for all of the people who have carried out the activities which have helped Back Bay on its way back, and I don't think there is any majority or minority involved in that statement.

[Applause.]

Facts are facts. I believe that the minority report is narrow and inconsistent and I think I can give some technical substantiation of that. It is, of course, centered around the question of building height and it is based on three untenable assumptions. One, that there is a valid precedent for high-rise construction in the Back Bay. Two, that it can be architecturally controlled. And three, that we can apply obsolete city planning notions to justify radical building forms in the private interest.

This so-called precedence stems from certain compromises made in the 1960's by well-meaning people with backs to the walls with the standard traditional forms of Boston politics and it is true that it resulted in an unworkable formula for spot-zoning, but this is a formula which seems everyone here tonight states that they can get along without.

Unfortunately, the damage has already been done, that all of the private planning at least for the Back, Back Bay and subsequent to that time has been painted by the unexplored idea that high-rise construction is actually physically compatible with the

[illegible]

Back Bay. I know of no impartial study which can substantiate that particular phenomena.

We are very fortunate to have evidence to the contrary right here in Boston. The ghastly intervention of Tremont-on-the-Common or the similar invasion of the privacy of the Fenway by Jamaicaway Towers, anyone who has been to the top of that building, they are completely aware of the irrelevant but beautiful view that it has of West Newton. [Laughter.] While completely compromising the lovely park which is wandering helplessly around its base. The wind round the Prudential, and to a certain extent 180 Beacon, is something more than a poetic figure of speech. [Laughter.]

The problem of incorporating automobiles which all forward looking zone proposals have, can best be explained to demonstrate through the complely unfeeling based structures of both Tremont-on-the-Common and 180 Beacon Street which, no, there is no human scale or integration with the city surface and yet this kind of construction requires massive absorption of automobiles and in doing so it qualifies itself to be built even higher.

The problem of 25 or more stories on the

Charles will ultimately leave perhaps only the bottom ten stories with any kind of understandable comprehensible view of the river. The rest of the floors will fall heir to working acquaintance with the weather over Belmont Hill, if in fact it can be seen through the Cambridge Industrial smog. [Laughter.]

Architectural styles may change along with the social needs and construction techniques, but the realities of architecture remain remarkably constant.

The height limits of the Back Bay are as much a part of its architecture now as they were in the middle of the 19th Century. The best way to demonstrate this is to consider what might be done if Back Bay had no buildings on it today north of Boylston Street.

Assuming that it would be developed under legal, economic, financial, and architectural controls similar to those used so successfully in the development of the Government Center, it is safe to assume that certain amenities would not only be preserved, but would provide a firm basis for the community design.

The buildings would very likely rise gently from the river in such a way that each tier would

have use and ventilation. At Boylston Street which is becoming the high spine, we might expect a sharp rise of majestic structures which would enjoy unblemished views of the river in its proper setting.

The problem of a view from a high building is that once you get a certain height, let's say over an area like the river, you lose all scale with that area. You need a foreground; you need some framework or reference to make that view, to relate to that view as a human being. These aren't theories, these are sound principles of planning.

It would be something like this, if it weren't exactly that design, that would be done to preserve the entire social and economic stability of the district and it would be a very shortsighted public agency which would condone what could only be called the "rape of the riverfront." Even if they had the freedom of designing the project from the ground up.

Next, I find myself stumbling over revealing expressions in the minority report. What, for instance, is meant by "when-existing-controls-are completely overhauled and systematic and sensible height limitations finally and firmly established?" How can it

be possible to pay homage to the architecture of Back Bay and at the same time talk about a set of "sensible and systematic" controls other than those which first created the district? We cannot have it both ways. Either the Back Bay is the Back Bay, or it is not. Any weakening change in height regulations will mark the beginning, not the end of retrograde speculation. [Applause.]

In fact, it is equally disturbing to hear the term "architectural controls" bandied about with such simplistic concepts as gateways and the discredited theory that it is always proper to put high-rise buildings next to open spaces.

As chairman of one of the older architectural district commissions, I would like to state unequivocally that there is not a legal mechanism now in existence which can insure architectural compatibility, not to mention integrity, when the relative differences in density are so great. Nor has anyone come forth with a comparable precedent for the towers that have been put up in a similar situation without serious damage to the visual and economic vitality of the district.

The controls exercised by the BRA through its urban design staff have produced results that are the

envy of other cities. Yet it is quite easy to trace those projects over which the BRA has had, for whatever reason, less effective control. I have great hopes for the emergence of enlightened, democratic methods by which we can preserve, improve and plan the character of our environment. I'm equally sure that the easiest way to negate these techniques is to subject them to arbitrary and substantial economic pressures.

Although the minority report is quick to invoke "inescapable principles of real estate development" with regard to building type differences on Boylston Street, it assumes that the differences between seven or eight, and twenty-eight stories on Beacon Street will go unnoticed.

There is great logic in using the upper reaches of Boylston Street as a carrot to encourage better treatment of its commercial face. We do not have to imagine what the effect of a number of tall buildings in the Back Bay will have on the validity of the high-spine concept. It is only necessary to go to the 29th floor of the Prudential and look out and judge for yourselves what view you would prefer if you were going to live in some sort of a project built along Boylston Street.

The minority report seems to assume that developers need to be coddled rather than challenged; that the architectural loss of the Normal Art School would be any greater than the loss of the fire station at Hereford Street, which it quietly writes off with a "disposition plan."

Development, it seems, is for city-owned parcels made available for little or nothing, and at the taxpayers' expense. What will happen when these are gone? One answer may be found in the curious wording of the paragraph of the minority report that doubts the likelihood of an increase in residential population without at least "a few" residential high-rise towers. After so careful a description of specific locations earlier in the report, why do we now have a term "a few?"

But, it is especially encouraging to read in the report of the majority that the Back Bay can survive as a heterogeneous community. That we can get along with high-income families and young people, including students. We need the more affluent and in my own case foolhardy families to give meaning to the single dwellings that have survived and we have much to learn from the placarded, angry youth searching about us and one thing

has become increasingly more obvious, the fact that there are some questions that cannot even be asked in traditional terms, let alone be answered.

I will leave you with five questions we can all ask of the Back Bay.

The most commonly heard argument for high-rise construction is that it will provide additional tax revenue for the city. Can we expect our architecturally intact inner city districts to provide a continually increasing share of the revenue without actually destroying their intrinsic value to the community?

The current trend is for more metropolitan relief to the inner city's unequal burdens and why should we adopt risky stopgap measures, for which no one can provide guarantees, until we can understand what new forms of fiscal support and mass transportation can do? For me it has been a thrilling experience in these post-war years to participate in the rebirth of a great city. Every section of Boston has produced willing, capable, and when appropriate, militant citizens who have responded effectively and often to the strident challenges of urban living. Will the quality of life created by aerial suburbs be an improvement over that which is developed in

sprawling kind?

Next, what could Back Bay do for itself once the deadly spores of speculation have been removed?

We are living in an age of cruelty, compassion, and compromise; one in which it seems almost frivolous to be concerned over the height of buildings. We must ask ourselves whether we are merely acting to preserve an important part of an important city, or whether we do not also seek to preserve our own identity as committed citizens. I think it is time for the real Back Bay to stand up. Thank you. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Will you identify yourself?

LAURA DWIGHT
Back Bay Resident

MISS DWIGHT: Laura Dwight, and I live in the Back Bay and live on Commonwealth Avenue. I am a resident.

The gentleman that just spoke before me touched on the subject and I just do want to express now that I am a little surprised that the whole task force I think was against the Leverett Circle bridge and one

reason was it was going to bring in a lot more cars and traffic.

Now, the minority report seems to have forgotten about that. You are not only going to have cars come in during the day and going out, you are going to have them right in here in Boston and I think your air pollution is going to be worse and worse. Thank you. [Applause.]

JOSH LOW
Back Bay Resident

MR. LOW: Mr. Chairman, my name is Josh Low, but that is insignificant. I am a resident of the Back Bay for the past 20 years and I feel that I am approaching the threshold of belonging. That will come in due time. [Laughter.]

But I have developed a deep and abiding interest in the area and my thesis tonight is not the economic theme. I have heard that expressed or rather subtly expressed. Nor is it the architectural theme. That doesn't interest me as much as what to me is most important. I may belong to an antiquated generation which still believes in gracious living. [Applause.]

And still believes in human values and when I look at this minority report and I do agree that dissent today is a commonplace in our society. [Laughter.] When I look at this minority report which begins with a feeling that the majority report is unwise and unwarranted and then goes on to talk about various characteristics of the integrity, the distinctiveness of the Back Bay, and I think we are all interested in that little segment of our community that is still distinct and still offers us a base for gracious living and the expression of human values.

After all, living is merely not -- rather I should say, living is just more than sleeping in a bedroom and getting up and going to work and eating your dinner and so on; there are factors in life which one can enjoy in terms of culture and neighbors and environment. Should I call it the ecology of our little Back Bay area?

All of that to me is very important and when I read this minority report, I use the arguments that are presented and precisely as the arguments I would like to present for retaining the character and distinctiveness of the Back Bay.

For instance, it says here that if we have

a few high-rise apartments, we are going to contribute to committed residents. I can't see that. [Laughter.] As I understand from my experience of apartment house living, I mean, large apartment house living, there is no greater trend of transients than the coming and going of apartment people who live in these large apartments.

I would like to know the statistics over at the Prudential jungle. I don't call it Prudential Center, I call it the Prudential jungle. [Laughter.] And when I see spring and fall come to the Back Bay and notice that our streets are narrowed by moving vans out in front of so many of these buildings, I wonder about these committed residents. [Applause.]

I think our approach, if I may present it from the point of view of human values and present it from the point of view of gracious living, our approach should direct itself towards bringing into the community of the Back Bay those people who will be committed residents by purchasing homes, by submitting themselves to the disciplines of the kind of buildings that will maintain the historical significance and maintain the values of the Back Bay.

If we could direct our energies to

inviting these people to come in and become part of us and live with us and stay with us and not move in and out and in and out, and I'm afraid, very much afraid that the high-rise project will bring just that type of people into the Back Bay. They have a right to live, true. [Laughter.] They have a right to rent high-rise apartments, but is this the kind? Is this the segment of the community where that should take place?

I also visualize in my mind in the light of the congestion today on Beacon Street and Marlboro Street and the sanitation problem in that particular area; what in the world is going to happen when we do bring in more than the 20,000 people who live there today? This 12 percent mentioned here, 12 percent increase to me is very insignificant in relation to these basic values and to these basic principles I am trying to bring out in this presentation.

Therefore, I am one that feels very strongly about the majority report and I say to you that here in Boston as in any large community, New York or Chicago or Philadelphia, surely you will have disciplines and you will have strong regulations, but real estate regulations are made to be broken.

Look into your own records here in the city and you are going to have -- you will present a 250 foot height for your buildings, I believe what Mr. Stahl said, there will be variations requested 300 and 350 and having started the movement toward high-rise apartments at the Dartmouth and Beacon and Arlington and Commonwealth and at the Charlesgate, there is no rule or regulation and there is no principle that will prevent other high-rise apartments from being built due to variations in zoning.

And so, I want to end up my comments and instead of beginning with the statement that the majority report is unwise and unwarranted in terms of its policies, let me conclude in saying that the majority report as presented to us is warranted and is wise and I hope we'll obtain. Thank you. [Applause.]

MARTIN HAYDEN
Back Bay Resident

MR. HAYDEN: Martin Hayden, 342 Beacon Street. I have lived there four years. It is one of those buildings that was built in 1876 and I know it won't last forever, but it may last our lifetime and certainly

deserves the kind of renovation that it has had.

I say I have lived there four years, so I am kind of new to this battle. However, I am from New York City and I have seen the battles there and I have seen what has happened both in the rape of Greenwich Village and Sutton Place before it and I have seen what good planning can do in the renovation and restoration of Brooklyn Heights.

Now, I am for the majority report. There are some things I would like to have seen in it that I think are missing, such as accepted schemes for the training and help of people who want to renovate their buildings, for the possible tax structures or the tax abatements and the possible interest rate reductions and things they are doing in other cities to assist in the restoration and reconstruction of architecturally valuable areas; that I haven't seen. I heard tonight, for instance, the discussion of the per unit size of apartments, but I didn't hear anything mentioned about zoning limits on the number of unrelated people per unit. [Applause and laughter.]

I find it interesting and I am all in favor of high-rise apartments on Boylston Street and I

find it curious that Mr. Warner suggested 13 stories on Boylston Street and yet like to talk about 28 stories on Beacon Street.

As I say, I live at 342. You saw a picture of it on the screen a while back. It is the northwest corner of Beacon and Dartmouth which is one of those being accumulated or attempted to be accumulated in this package for one of the high-rise sites. Needless to say I am a little concerned about it. [Laughter.]

I take some exception to what I think are rather self-serving statistics in the published report which Mr. Perera has already reduced from 14 to 12 to 10 percent increase.

If I could just go into the figures just for a moment, he talks about 100 units of new high-rise versus 60 existing units of high-rise. Well, on the block, on the northwest corner of Beacon Street there are 65 units alone. This is not both corners, this is just one tower.

If I use his figures of two residents per unit, we are comparing 130 residents against 200 residents in high-rise or a net gain of 35 units or 70 residents. If I multiply by five sites, which certainly would be a

possibility; it is not in fact existing, we come to a net gain of 350 residents. When applied against an unchecked figure of 7,000 permanent residents in the area, comes to a net gain of 5 percent.

I am not ready to buy the fact that there are only 7,000 permanent residents in this area. I can't believe that there are 14,000 transients and 7,000 permanents. As a matter of fact, in the 65 units on the northwest corner of Beacon Street there are 95 percent permanent residents and, as a matter of fact, further the building that I live in is well in excess, has well in excess of a $50,000 a year rent roll and that is for 10 units.

Now, I don't see frankly where the ungraciousness of high-rise living is going to replace either that kind of income or that kind of style. [Applause.]

RICHARD REVAN
Back Bay Resident

MR. REVAN: Dick Revan. I live at 5 Gloucester Street and I have almost discharged my G.I. mortgage. [Laughter.]

It seems to me appropriate that inasmuch as

this task force, this distinguished and hard-working task force was appointed, if my memory serves me right, on the 1st of November, 1969, from the stage of the auditorium of the Boston Museum of Fine Arts, it was the museum's honor and privilege to put on an exhibition of Back Bay Boston, the city as a work of art, and to focus everybody's attention we hope on the urban values implicit in this area.

And I would like to present to you a brief statement from Mr. Rathbone, the director of the Boston Museum, who unfortunately cannot be here tonight, but feels very strongly about high-rise in the Back Bay. He is unalterably opposed to it and he would like to say just this to you; that is, Paris is the most beautiful city in the world, why? Because the city authorities have steadfastly preserved uniform height regulations throughout the city.

He goes on to say, I hope that everybody will recognize the urban values that we are lucky enough to have inherited and will take no part in destroying them. Other cities like New Orleans and Savannah have lived to rue the day that they destroyed the older parts of their city and would give anything to have them back. Let Boston

take heed.

Now, may I say a word myself? For some reason the reprint of the majority or minority reports which we have, have neglected the names of the people who were on the majority report. The minority report people are given, but I would like to read, if I may, the six people who supported, who turned in the majority report. William Doebele, Professor of Advanced Environmental Studies, Harvard University; Professor Henry A. Millon, Professor of Architecture, MIT; William Nash, Professor of City and Regional Planning, Harvard University; John Ryan, President, Ryan, Elliott & Company; Frederick A. Stahl, Chairman of the Preservation Committee of the Boston Society of Architects; Walter Muir Whitehill, Director of the Boston Athenaeum.

I think this is a pretty blue ribbon panel that has come out on behalf of the majority report and inasmuch as they are not mentioned in this printed report, I would like to pay tribute to them here; and finally for my own part I would like to say that it is my feeling that the Back Bay depends on scale and proportion for its effect and livability and for heaven's sake let's not tamper with it and let's not build these, what Joe Eldredge

calls aerial suburbs in these high-rise buildings, aerial suburbs which distort the human scale as well as the architectural scale, and it seems to me that if we give in to high-rise, that we can only quote back to ourselves the immortal words of Pogo; gentlemen, or ladies and gentlemen, we have met the enemy and it is us. [Laughter and applause.]

JOHN OSBOURNE
Back Bay Resident

MR. OSBOURNE: As a physician I can't claim to have any architectural know-how, but civil strife, I don't think there is anybody here that has any real question that they are for an improved tax base in some way and yet I think everybody here is for an economic revival of the region and area which includes the Back Bay.

To say that you are against this would be absolutely crazy. The house that I bought three years ago has already been appreciated in value and I like this. It is fine. What I submit is what the lady from the Landmark Commission has been saying is there is already an economic renaissance, if you will, going on in the assistance of buildings and elsewhere and I am glad it is

there and it is a much better boost to the area than any one high-rise and I submit all the arguments or many of them of the minority report are simply rationales to justify one project on Dartmought Street and I don't think this is right.

Senator Ames which bothers me equates this with a lack of city services and how in God's name one high-rise or two is going to bring a lot of sewerage and cops and, you know. [Laughter.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Yes, Ma'am.

ELLEN SNYDER
BRA Staff Member and Back Bay Resident

MISS SNYDER: My name is Ellen Snyder, a BRA staff member and a Back Bay resident and from the fourth floor of my house the windows of 330 Beacon shut out the sunlight and I hate that with a passion and I just want to give some of my technical expertise on this topic which is, I have just finished doing for the BRA an analysis of the results of the Boston area study done by Harvard and MIT joint urban center on Boston housing which indicates the worse housing in the city is still in the South End, Roxbury, and Brighton and north Dorchester and not in the Back Bay, and I would like to point out in terms of

the population figures the time when it was indicated that the Back Bay was losing population, so was the rest of Boston and as far as the analysis currently being done in BRA's own research department indicates that down-trending in population has ceased completely and is reversing itself especially in Ward 5 which is Back Bay and conversely is raising the population probably faster than that of the rest of the city. [Applause.]

DELLABAR SULLIVAN
Back Bay Resident

MR. SULLIVAN: For the edification of our recently arrived neighbor from New York, I love Back Bay and I was at least born here and I was on Beacon Street and I live at 330 Commonwealth Avenue now and several of our neighbors here live up in 358 and I tell you we maintain the exterior and maintain the labor community and we have taken and built the insides so it is livable, so that it is suitable for young professional people and young business people.

So, it is reversing the downward trend from the rooming house student type of area, and that it is a certain block that has evolved into a residential community,

one perhaps that we may not live in all our life, but that certain people may be able to enjoy with us and take wherever else they may go.

I suggest to you and in fact I will tell you that we have done in our own offices a study on rehabilitation of certain corners and certain corners in this Back Bay area are on the way down because there are buildings that just can't be rehabilitated. The evening clinic, the Webster House, the Vendome, and let's be specific; I think it is all agreed that we are talking about specific corners here tonight.

The buildings that are on the lots that are on these particular corners cannot in our estimation and in the estimation of any bank we talk to be rehabilitated. So, they are going to go downhill. They are going to become black teeth or eyes and they are going to become sores and if you get sores in the neighborhood, they are going to present problems and people won't want to live there, and I think the minority report and study has pointed up what we are going to have to live with and that is that we are going to have to put in something that we can maintain, the kind of people that we want in the community or we are going to have blight or a hole there

and this is what we saw happen in the very beautiful area of the South End.

I would like to see the Back Bay as I have known it ever since I tried to roller skate on the brick sidewalks on Beacon Street, but the fact of the matter is the corner buildings just won't economically support it and I have to commend to you the minority report. [Applause.]

MR. HOROS
Back Bay Resident

MR. HOROS: I live on Marlboro Street. Is it possible to address a question to the panel rather than tell you what we think?

MODERATOR CANHAM: Sure.

MR. HOROS: Tonight introduced the concept with reference to the high-spine of Boylston and while sitting here listening to it, I was thinking in terms of what we knew about high-spines and what happened in other cities and what happened in residential areas?

The man mentioned about New York Greenwich Village, and I'm not too familiar with that, but I do remember what happened in Central Park along the West

Side and what subsequently happened to the brownstones immediately to the west of Central Park West and when it was developed there.

One also thinks of Chicago and Michigan with a high-spine and what happened to the area west of this spine. How do you justify your thinking in terms of this high-spine and the preservation other than the fact that I don't really want to live in a museum, I want to live in a viable community.

I am a little sick of living in this museum idea and I want to know now how we keep it viable and interesting to people.

MODERATOR CANHAM: All right, I would like to suggest to Mr. Stahl say a word in explanation of the high-spine concept and possibly Mr. Perera would like to say a word about it regarding the minority report.

MR. STAHL: I am not the originator of the idea. It is an idea that has been talked about for some time, as I indicated.

I think it was originated and given the name by the urban design committee of Boston Society of Architects a good many years ago and basically what it says is that there shallbe established a direction for the

high density development, because in that direction there are the forces and systems, highways, transits, etc., to support such development; and by and large this is the rationale.

Now, I take it one part of your question is what happens to the adjoining areas? Say, the Back Bay, which is then adjacent to the district which is being intensified in its development because it has suitability for high density development, transportation, and so on.

I think the response to that that I would give is that firm and clear and irrevocable barriers to the slopping over of density I think have to be maintained.

Now, I have thought in my mind a good bit since you started this discussion on the Back Bay, why doesn't everybody try to build high-rise on Beacon Hill? Its view is better and you are not looking just at Cambridge, but all the way out to the west and why wouldn't anyone dream of it? Why? Because for a long time it has been out of the question, and I think this is the way to respond to the question that you say; how can you have intense development here and a traditional density development here, living compatibly and you observe that American cities don't seem to function that way, but this

is one that has in respect to this, because the advantages are there, because people want it that way and will fight for it that way.

I don't know if that is an adequate answer.

MR. HOROS: I think that is fine. Thank you.

MODERATOR CANHAM: Do you want to add something, Mr. Perera?

MR. PERERA: I might say just one or two words about the Boylston Street proposal in the majority report.

The minority didn't feel this is substantial evidence that it was feasible; that is to say, that the development proposed by the majority was read into the housing on Boylston Street, nor did that involvement on Beacon Street solve social problems over on Beacon Street and Commonwealth Avenue, and I might say further here that with respect to the high-rise spine in Boylston Street that I think there are limitations expressed in the plan on heighth to the point of view of preventing extreme shadows being cast and the sun casting in a southerly route and this is important particularly during the winter months.

For that reason heighth limitations mentioned is an important factor in the development of Boylston Street, but I think that development is unclear and sketchy and probably unworkable in the cast given to it by the majority.

I might add here that with respect to the shadow question, the towers proposed bythe minority would not cast shadows over substantial portions of the Back Bay. Those on Beacon Street would never cast a shadow. So, as far as I can ascertain on any other portion of the residential districts, since the sun is at all times of the year well to the south of the 90 degrees in relationship to the water side, development on the easterly extremity of the Back Bay, Arlington, the sun will pass behind the tower only at early times of the day and during the majority of the day. At all times of the year the sun will be well to the west of the tower.

I am, however, and I think this is something that you should consider; I am extremely concerned about the proposal for the high-rise spine in the Park Square if there are going to be shadows cast and we are concerned about the high-rise towers proposed between Arlington and Tremont and what it will do to the Public Garden and the

Common and what Tremont-on-the-Common has already done and consider if you will what a 30 or 40 or 50 story structure constructed between Arlington and Tremont might do with respect to shadows falling across the Public Gardens and the Common and I urge you to consider that.

JOHN WILLIAMS
Back Bay Resident

MR. WILLIAMS: My name is John Williams, and I'm looking to the future because I have been elected to be president next year, president of the Neighborhood Association of the Back Bay and what I see in the future is a battle not between one segment of us and others, but between all of us and other forces.

There is a property on Commonwealth Avenue on Clarendon Street that is leveled in anticipation of building high in Commonwealth, in the middle of our district and it is a problem of the Vendome which is closed down and we don't know what is going to happen.

We know what the law is now, which permits going to the moon. Commissioner Warner spoke of removing spot-zoning for the eight corners. I am not sure I heard him say that he also was recommending a height limit, and

so I am not, maybe he can clarify that after I speak, but in any event to get rid of those eight corners is going to take a battle. We are going to have to unite.

I think tonight we had good humor really and we haven't been at each other's throats and I commend you on the idea of not doing that. We are going to have to work together and as president of the Nieghborhood Association I will submit to the board of directors and to the membership the concept of following the decision made by Commissioner Warner as the planning director of the City of Boston and it is a difficult issue and I think if it rested on architectural value alone, I wouldn't have any doubt of where I come out, because when I go to the Memorial Drive and look back over the Back Bay, it is the most beautiful site in the world, but I am concerned with the residents also and I have been fighting garages, as you may know, and it is a problem for us certainly dedicated owners, those good people in the Back Bay, and it is a hot potato and it is now going over to Mr. Warner.

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you.

JAMES NEE
Back Bay Resident

MR. NEE: James Nee. I have studied all

possible angles and I feel the minority report is much more manageable and I think it offers to the Back Bay an opportunity to remain not as a museum which looks nice, but as a viable residential area.

I think the minority report deserves a little more cheer and a lot fewer hisses. [Applause.]

VOICE: First, I'm a fourth generation living in the Back Bay at the same address on Newbury Street which is a slum area. [Laughter.] In two capacities, and second I'm here unofficially as a representative of the facilities department of the city on schools and first what Mr. Warner said about the racial imbalance law is true, but you might ask why have other schools in the city closed? And the reason you get is when they are building new schools, there are only about 200 white children left in the Back Bay and that isn't enough children to provide an adequate school program and so that is only one class per grade and you can't give the kids any choice and you can't give them a gym or a swimming pool and all the facilities which they need to have, the same kind of program that they have if they livedin a suburban community.

So, I would ask you when considering the

two proposals to consider which proposal offers the better chance of attracting family residents with children in the area who naturally are going to be more stable and less transient. Are they going to be the small units which are produced in little apartment buildings with large rents or rehabilitated town houses with large space and yards and so on?

And I think you can consider that and decide which way you would like to be planning and that decision I think is up to the residents, whether they like the children or not, they are sort of stuck with them if they want to stay that way. Thank you. [Applause.]

VOICE: I have only lived in the Back Bay for five years and I would like to say nothing, but ask the panel a question, and that is, in speaking of all these blighted corners which everybody admits is a real problem; is there any solution on that problem other than building a tower 250 feet high on the corner?

I would like to ask Mr. Stahl that and then have Mr. Perera reply perhaps.

MR. STAHL: I will refer to Mr. Ryan.

MR. RYAN: I think preservation of the problem corners is an effort that should be expended to

realize the continuity of the architectural scale of the Back Bay and in my judgment shouldn't create more problems by demolition and creation of sites that have to be dealt with by the development administrator.

I would like to see every effort expended on the preservation of these properties and certainly some of the difficulties that particular buildings have require a tremendous effort and tremendous input by the Boston Redevelopment Authority in my judgment to preserve them, but this is my suggestion that we fight for the preservation of these buildings as best we can.

MR. PERERA: Well, the only corner sites that I know of that the minority propose to have new construction of a higher variety on is the corner on Commonwealth Avenue at either end and one of them is vacant and the other two are occupied.

At present, if you get into questions of the Vendome, I am for the preservation and I have worked extremely hard and been in New York on one occasion and discussed it continuously with the owners of the Vendome for four or five years, methods by which that building might be rehabilitated, but there is a gap between the enthusiasm of those in the Boston Redevelopment Authority

staff and others who are in favor of preservation, as I am, and the capacity of those same individuals to develop the usual skills andtools needed to develop preservation plans for the buildings which they seek to preserve.

I am not criticizing them, because I think this is an area of knowledge which is just beginning to be developed, but I must say that it is conspicuous by its absence so far as the present situation is concerned and this is not just local, this is a national fact.

It is unfortunate indeed that we cannot seem to develop within our planning department a program to preserve the Hotel Vendome, and yet that very simply, ladies and gentlemen, is the case. It is unfortunate that we haven't been able to develop a proposal for the Clarendon Street site, but that happens to be the case. The site, the Somerset that Mr. Stahl says will become a business building, I wonder if that in the long run may not be the only trend for the preservation of some of these corner pieces and I seriously question whether that is it in the long term.

VOICE: It seems to me the main contributor to this problem is the acquisition expense on these properties that has traditionally been kept high through

greed.

The fact that as long as there is the slightest chance that someone can bleed people and take these properties down because they are of no value, like Boston City Hall which is now being preserved through hard work and some miracles, and as long as there is the possibility of these properties being declared economically untenable, yes, then the acquisition prices will be high.

I think we have to look ahead to more than just those corners. We have to look ahead to perhaps the old museum of natural history which may be declared untenable and brought down to be replaced by steel and concrete.

Boston has the most beautiful sky of any city in this country and I think we should continue to be able to see them. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Ladies and gentlemen, you have been very patient.

VOICE: Nothing has been said about hotels in Boston. We need some now. Have you thought that out at all?

Are we going to have any new hotels?

CHAIRMAN WARNER: We are going to have a

considerable amount of additional hotel space constructed I expect in the next few years.

We have a kind of a paradoxical situation with the Somerset closing and the Vendome and yet Boston last year had the second highest occupancy rate for hotels in the country, and we have some very strong developer interest in other sections of the city for the hotel construction and there will be considerable construction as I say in the next few years.

MODERATOR CANHAM: Yes, sir?

BURARD ALLEN
Back Bay Resident

MR. ALLEN: Burard Allen, 244 Beacon Street. One of those characterized as, I think, an occupiable site.

I fully appreciate the majority report. I hope that Mr. Warner will take it seriously and I am afraid I do not appreciate the minority report.

I have lived in the area for about six years and I have lived at my current address about three years. I don't feel that I am transient. I am also a student. I work part-time as a student of urban affairs at Boston University; yet I still feel I am a responsible resident.

I am also a registered voter.

It seems to me that the minority report asks for a heterogeneous mixture of architecture or building size and yet a homogeneous mixture of population. I see very many elderly people in the area, and some of them do live in the rooming houses and many of them do, and I doubt -- I think that they would be the first to go. I don't think the students will, because they can afford the high-rise if they band together, in spite of the limitations of how many people per units; but the elderly people and these great plazas that are being constructed in the area, whether it be the Dartmouth, Prudential or Government Center, I have trouble and I am a fairly healthy person and on those days I am not bright and shiny, those days that the wind whips you across and I think this is another consideration. Thank you very much. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Yes, sir?

LOUIS ARPEL
Back Bay Resident

MR. ARPEL: Louis Arpel. I live at Gloucester Street and I would like to address myself to the point that

was just mentioned by the gentleman beforeme.

One of the boogey men I think raised by the minority report, and I am both a student and a transient living in the Back Bay, but I resent the implication that I am not committed to the Back Bay or that I will not work for the preservation of the Back Bay, or that I am in any way contributing to the Back Bay, but downgrading of the Back Bay, and I think the way to get the students committed is to somehow reach them rather than try to exclude them from your community.

I think this is a problem which is prevalent in allour society, one which has again lifted its head and I would like to continue to work with the Back Bay and work with the community and to strengthen the Back Bay community. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Thank you.

VOICE: I think that what we should do is strengthen the qualities that we would like as a residential area in the Back Bay and one of the things that bothered everybody is the noise in the Back Bay.

If we start tearing down and building up, we are going to have more noise, and if we could do something about the trucks that race down Beacon Street at night and

do this sort of thing, these are the things that are possible.

If we could just recapture in some way that some of the residential qualities that we think exist, but really don't exist now in the Back Bay, I think we might hold on to the people to move back and perhaps attract some others. [Applause.]

MODERATOR CANHAM: Ladies and gentlemen, you have been extremely patient. May I thank you all, those who have listened and spoken, and turn the meeting back to Mr. Warner.

CHAIRMAN WARNER: Well, I think it has all been said and it has all been written and ----

VOICE: Are we going to vote?

CHAIRMAN WARNER: No, Ma'am. I don't think we are going to vote. I think we have gotten a clear expression of people's feelings. If there remains something to be said that hasn't been said, if there is something you would like to say to me, you can talk to me after the meeting or send me a letter.

I think we have fully explored the problems. Someone said so many of them and up at the Boston Redevelopment Authority and we accept that, and we expect

we will resolve this question and quite soon.

We really have all had a great deal of time to think about it. I must say I admire this country and this nation of ours in so many ways and I think about it and as I sit at some of these meetings, because neighborhoods and the people of the neighborhoods, despite the moments of pessimism that many of us have had these days, really do care about what happens and perhaps lots of us care a lot and that then gets to be intense, but I admire you all for coming tonight and I admire you for caring and I'm sure as in most of the things we do, we are not going to please everybody when we resolve this question, but it needs resolving and as the agency with a great deal of that responsibility, we will accept it and get it done.

I want to thank the task force again very, very much. We are very fortunate to have such capable and dedicated people to help us and allit got them was one rather stingy meal at Joseph's, I guess. [Applause.]

[Whereupon, at 10:20 o'clock p.m., the meeting was adjourned.]